

What do I know of Good Friday? Day of sorrows, day that taps into all my grief, a difficult day, day of disappointment, day of letting go, of resting. Jesus, we hear, was loving and forgiving until the end. Can I do that? I don't know. I have never been persecuted in such a way. I have never been tried in a trumped up court. I have never lived in a country run by foreigners. I have never even been oppressed by the church except perhaps in the delay of my ordination due to the fact that I am a woman. So, good Friday. Good Friday? I come to hear the story. I come to reflect. I come to pray. I come to rest. I come to listen, to be challenged. What about you?

Come and meet me in the middle of the air:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g34-nB3oym4>

Fr Chris Ryan:

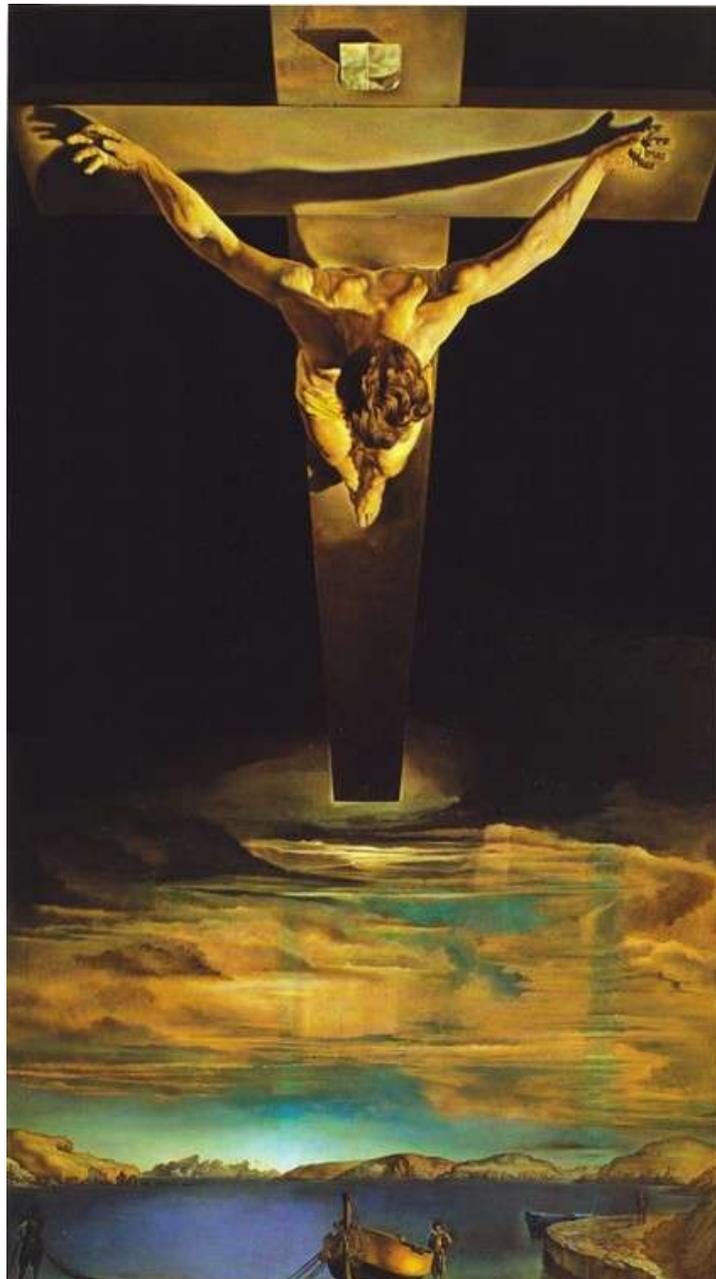
'Meet me in the Middle of the Air', is a haunting song composed by Paul Kelly, which we reflected on in our Lenten study..

The lyrics of the song are largely taken from Psalm 23: 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want'. The refrain that runs through the song: 'come and meet me in the middle of the air, I will meet you in the middle of the air' is actually an allusion to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, but when Kelly uses it he is drawing upon a line that he says has been around for a hundred years in blues, Gospels and spirituals. Woody Guthrie, Dylan, Led Zeppelin have all used the line, asking God/Jesus to meet them in the middle of the air. It has become a key phrase in folk music for expressing the human being's desire for God.

This is where Paul Kelly's use of the line takes a significant twist, because in the past it has been used as an invocation, as prayer that the singer prays expressing his or her desire for God, his or her desire to be met by Jesus. But in Kelly's song, the protagonist is not the human person, it is God.

It is God who is saying, 'come and meet me in the middle of the air'. It is God telling us that he is our true Shepherd, who will lead us home. In this lyrical twist Kelly is being deeply faithful, perhaps more faithful than he realises, to a critical scriptural insight: that our desire for God is superabundantly surpassed and fulfilled in God's desire for us.

This is because God really does meet us in the middle of the air... he meets us on the Cross, where Jesus is lifted up as the place of union, in his own racked and tortured body, between God and the human race. "When I am lifted up", Jesus had prophesied, "I will draw all to myself".



This is fulfilled in the middle of the air as he is suspended from the Cross between heaven and earth. This image of the crucifixion as the bridge between heaven and earth is perhaps most powerfully captured by Salvador Dali's famous painting of the Crucifixion, based on the drawing of St John of the Cross. In the painting, we are as it were looking down from above Christ as he hangs upon the cross, down to the earth below. This is the mystery of Good Friday, that our desire for God is surpassed by God's desire for us, most powerfully manifest in the Crucified.' Fr Chris Ryan¹.

I leave you with the Dali image, and a poem by Australian poet, Bruce Dawe *and a good friday was had by all*, which captures the very human side of those God loves to the end, and a hint of Christ's presence:

You men there, keep those women back
and God Almighty he laid down
on the crossed timber and old Silenus
my offsider looked at me as if to say
nice work for soldiers, your mind's not your own
once you sign that dotted line Ave Caesar
and all that malarkey Imperator Rex

well this Nazarene
didn't make it any easier
really – not like the ones
who kick up a fuss so you can
do your block and take it out on them

Silenus

held the spikes steady and I let fly
with the sledge-hammer, not looking
on the downswing trying hard not to hear
over the women's wailing the bones give way
the iron shocking the dumb wood.

¹ <https://frchrisryanmqi.wordpress.com/2012/03/26/paul-kelly-salvador-dali-and-the-crucifixion-of-jesus/>

Orders is orders, I said after it was over
nothing personal you understand – we had a
drill-sergeant once thought he was God but he wasn't
a patch on you

then we hauled on the ropes
and he rose in the hot air
like a diver just leaving the springboard, arms spread
so it seemed
over the whole damned creation
over the big men who must have had it in for him
and the curious ones who'll watch anything if it's free
with only the usual women caring anywhere
and a blind man in tears.

'come and meet me in the middle of the air', he says.

'This is the mystery of Good Friday, that our desire for God is
surpassed by God's desire for us, most powerfully manifest in the
Crucified.' Fr Chris Ryan².

In today's reflection from 'Deep calls to Deep, Celia Kemp suggests:
'Just for a moment, try to put aside the question of what it means.
The why. And just sit with what happened. The what'.³ Not a bad
idea.

Susanna

² <https://frchrisryanmql.wordpress.com/2012/03/26/paul-kelly-salvador-dali-and-the-crucifixion-of-jesus/>

³ Celia Kemp in *Deep calls to Deep*, an ABM app for reflection